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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Forty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 1 February 1991, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. MARTIUS (Germany)

later: Mr. VASSILENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE (agenda item 4) (continued) (E/CN.4/1991/6-8, 60-62 and 65; A/45/3, 13 and Add.1, 35 and Corr.1, 84, 306, 503, 576, 595, 608-614 and 726)

THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS APPLICATION TO PEOPLES UNDER COLONIAL OR ALIEN DOMINATION OR FOREIGN OCCUPATION (agenda item 9) (continued) (E/CN.4/1991/13 and 14; E/CN.4/1991/NGO/2; A/45/488)

1. Mr. FAN GUOXIANG (China), referring to the right of peoples to self-determination, recalled that the Charter of the United Nations provided that one of the purposes of the Organization was "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples". The theory and practice of that right had steadily advanced. The United Nations had adopted a number of important documents in the field concerned, such as the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of Their Independence and Sovereignty, and the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. All those documents set forth the basic principles which should guide the conduct of international relations and the settlement of major international disputes.

2. Guided by the principle of self-determination, many nations that had long been subjected to foreign oppression, exploitation and enslavement had cast off their yoke and won their independence.

3. History and reality proved that a population subjected to foreign aggression and occupation could not achieve total political independence, national self-determination, economic development or social stability, not to speak of the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which necessarily depended on the exercise of the right to self-determination. Over the years, the relevant United Nations organs, and the Commission on Human Rights in particular, had laid stress on the importance of that right and adopted a series of resolutions in support of the just struggle of the oppressed peoples.

4. The self-determination of the Namibian people had long been a major concern of the United Nations and the Commission. With the support of the African people and the rest of the international community, the Namibian people had finally secured their freedom and gained their independence in March 1990. The Chinese Government and people had consistently and firmly supported the peoples of various countries in their struggle for self-determination and independence, and they hoped that the Namibian people would continue to strengthen their national independence.

5. Through the unremitting efforts of the international community over the past decade, political settlement of the Cambodian question had achieved a breakthrough in 1990. In September of that year, the Security Council had adopted resolution 668 (1990) and endorsed the framework documents of the programme for the comprehensive settlement of the Cambodian conflict agreed upon by the five permanent members of the Security Council. His Government

appreciated the efforts made by the co-chairmen of the International Conference in Paris and by the three Cambodian resistance forces, and it hoped that continued progress would be made in that direction. It also hoped that the parties maintaining a stubborn position would shortly cease to place obstacles in the way of a comprehensive political settlement of the question.

6. China regretted to see the continued illegal occupation of Palestinian territories by the Israeli authorities and the continued deprivation of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The Israeli Government had suppressed the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories at the cost of countless human lives and had committed mass and flagrant violations of human rights. The Chinese Government firmly supported the just cause of the Palestinian people and hoped that the international community would work for the early convening of an international conference on the Middle East question under United Nations auspices and with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and of all the parties concerned.

7. His Government was opposed to Iraq's annexation of Kuwait, and it urged the Iraqi Government to respond to the appeals of the international community, to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions and to withdraw its troops from Kuwait immediately and unconditionally in order to restore the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait and its legitimate Government. It regretted the failure of peace efforts and the inability to avoid the Gulf war, but hoped that the international community would continue its efforts to reach a solution to the Gulf crisis.

8. The Chinese authorities reaffirmed their position that international relations should be based on the principles of peaceful co-existence, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, and equality and mutual benefit. The international community must continue its efforts in 1991 for the universal realization of the principle of self-determination.

9. Mr. CHABALA (Zambia) said that the existence of flagrant and mass violations of human rights in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine was deeply regrettable and was one of the main challenges with which the Commission should be concerned. Since 1968, when the situation of human rights in those territories had first come before the Commission, the Israeli occupation forces had continued their practices of illegal detention without trial, mass arrests, torture and killing of civilians, collective punishment, closure of schools and universities, demolition of houses, confiscation of land, establishment of settlements, attacks on holy places, deportations and many other violations. Many bodies, including the Commission on Human Rights, the Economic and Social Council, UNRWA, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, had issued well-documented reports on the question. The Secretary-General had also submitted reports to the Security Council. Reference should also be made to the invaluable investigatory work and analytical reports of the non-governmental organizations and human rights defence groups. The Israeli authorities had never refuted the contents of those reports.

10. The violations of human rights committed in the occupied territories had been brought to the attention of all Governments, the competent United Nations

bodies, the specialized agencies, regional intergovernmental organizations and international humanitarian organizations in accordance with Commission resolutions, including resolutions 1990/2 A and B and 1990/3, adopted by the Commission at its forty-sixth session.

11. The point was not to question those violations, since there was overwhelming and irrefutable evidence of their occurrence. Nor was there any doubt that the international community was entirely aware of the situation. No event could better illustrate its seriousness than the wilful massacre of 31 Palestinians on the esplanade of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem in October 1990.

12. It was self-evident that the Israeli policy of deportations, which had claimed 1,365 victims since 1967, was a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and of a number of Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 469 (1980), 484 (1980), 607 (1988) and 608 (1988). The settlement in the occupied territories of Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union and elsewhere was also illegal. What was most significant was that, despite the persistent, systematic and irrefutable nature and the seriousness and illegality of those violations in terms of the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the two International Covenants on Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Israeli authorities had continued to defy the international community's condemnation with impunity. The international community had been rendered virtually impotent by the support given to Israel by its major Western allies, with their threatened or actual use of the veto in the Security Council.

13. The Security Council had thus been unable to provide protection to the Palestinians against the human rights violations to which they were subjected, and had also been prevented from adopting effective measures for a comprehensive and lasting solution to the underlying political causes of the Middle East problem.

14. Israel's systematic refusal to implement the Commission's resolutions and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) was based on the conviction that no international sanctions would be taken against it so long as it enjoyed the support and protection of its major Western allies.

15. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) provided for Israel's unconditional withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories and the right of all countries in the Middle East, including Israel of course, to live within secure boundaries. They also provided for the convening of an international peace conference with the participation of all the parties concerned in the Middle East conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization. The solution to the conflict also depended on the establishment of an independent homeland for the Palestinians.

16. All that was needed to arrive at that solution was for the Security Council to ensure the full implementation of the two aforementioned resolutions. Failure to do so would unhappily confirm the concern felt about the application of double standards to similar international situations by certain members of the Council. The application of international law and of the provisions of international conventions must be consistent, comprehensive

and objective. Those principles should also apply to human rights issues, without consideration of race, religion or ideology. The realization of the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of the occupied Arab territories, Namibia and South Africa had been unduly delayed by the application of double standards.

17. In Zambia's view, it was in Israel's interest to recognize the inalienable rights of the Palestinians in the occupied territories and to apply to them immediately the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. Israel's security would be better served by peaceful co-existence with its Arab neighbours than by its continued dependence on its major allies.

18. In any event, the international community had to provide protection to the Palestinians until Israel withdrew from the occupied Arab territories. It was highly regrettable that the Security Council had so far been unable to perform that task. Member States, international organizations, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations must also provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians.

19. As the intifada had shown, the cause and aspirations of the Palestinian people could never be destroyed by force. The Commission had a duty to strive for the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the people of the occupied Arab territories.

20. Mr. ZAFAR (Pakistan) said that self-determination was the raison d'être of every nation State and represented the formal expression of the collective will of the people. A denial of that principle led to the grossest of injustices and almost invariably to conflicts and violence.

21. Despite its crucial importance, the question of the Gulf war, whose outcome would decide the future of an entire region, must not divert the Commission's attention from the many other situations in the world where the right of peoples to self-determination was being denied.

22. The fact that that right had been denied for so long to the 5 million inhabitants of Jammu and Kashmir was a tragedy for South Asia. Time and again, the Security Council had affirmed that the final disposition of the State of Jammu and Kashmir should reflect the will of the people, as expressed in a free and impartial plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations. Such statements had been to no avail.

23. The Kashmir dispute had had its beginnings in the non-implementation of the partition principles under which Pakistan itself had exercised its right to self-determination and become an independent State. India had brought that issue before the Security Council on 1 January 1948 and then, as now, had held Pakistan responsible for creating disturbances in Kashmir. The Security Council had not endorsed the Indian position and, in its resolution of 17 January 1948, had called upon the parties to improve the situation and to refrain from any acts which might aggravate the situation.

24. Subsequently, India had launched a full-scale military offensive in order to impose a solution in Kashmir. The United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan had then been established by Security Council resolution 39 (1948) of 20 January 1948, with the direction to proceed to the spot as quickly as

possible. The Commission had recommended a plebiscite in Kashmir. The proposal had been accepted both by India and by Pakistan and the recommendation of the Commission had been adopted by a resolution of 5 January 1949, which had provided "that the question of the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan will be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite". Since then, successive Indian Governments had reneged on that commitment, resorting to the baseless argument that Kashmir was an internal Indian problem about which the United Nations and the Security Council therefore had nothing to say.

25. Elections had actually been held, but under the watchful control of the Indian Army and its bayonets. The Security Council had reacted to that situation in its resolution 122 (1957), which had recalled that "the final disposition of the State of Jammu and Kashmir will be made in accordance with the will of the people expressed through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite conducted under the auspices of the United Nations" and stated, with reference to the elections arranged by India, that any action taken by the constituent assembly "to determine the future shape and affiliation of the entire State or any part thereof, or action by the parties concerned in support of any such action by the assembly, would not constitute a disposition of the State in accordance with the above principle". The fact that fewer than 5 per cent of Kashmiri voters had turned out in the elections held in 1989 in the territory occupied by India was a clear demonstration of the ploy by India to use those so-called elections to justify its occupation of that territory by force.

26. The Simla Agreement of 1972 between Pakistan and India had acknowledged that the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations must govern relations between the two countries and that any attempt to deny Pakistan the right to bring the question of Kashmir before the United Nations would be incompatible not only with the Agreement, but also with the Charter of the United Nations. Article 103 of the Charter stated that, "In the event of a conflict between the obligations of the Members of the United Nations under the ... Charter and their obligations under any other international agreement, their obligations under the ... Charter shall prevail".

27. The settlement of the problem of the State of Jammu and Kashmir had been delayed only too long and the question of the right of the people of that State to self-determination was now an urgent one.

28. His delegation therefore hoped that India would realize that it had nothing to gain by stifling the aspirations of the people of Kashmir. His Government would continue its efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement of the problem in the spirit of the United Nations resolutions and the Simla Agreement.

29. Mr. ROMARE (Sweden) said that human rights violations were a common feature in the Middle East, as in many other parts of the world. One of the underlying problems was the lack of democracy in most of the countries concerned.

30. Israeli democracy extended only partly to the Israeli Arabs, who were subjected to discriminatory treatment in various fields. The Palestinian population of the occupied territories had no democratic rights whatever.

31. The Israeli occupation of Syrian and Palestinian territories dated from 1967 and the human rights situation in the occupied territories had been on the Commission's agenda for many years. However, such violations continued year after year and had become more serious, especially since 1987, when the intifada had begun. The list of brutal and violent acts committed by the Israeli occupation forces was regrettably only too familiar. One of the most tragic incidents in recent months had taken place, in Jerusalem on 8 October 1990, when Palestinians had been fired on by the security forces and 19 had been killed.

32. Israel continued to subject the Palestinians to administrative detention measures which did not allow for any independent judicial examination and which had been applied against a number of Palestinian moderates despite their advocacy of dialogue with Israel.

33. There had also been many deportations, in defiance of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and condemnations by the Security Council.

34. Most Palestinian universities had been closed since January 1988 and schools had also been shut down on various occasions, thus depriving Palestinians of the right to education.

35. Many Palestinian children had been affected by the violence and brutal methods used by the Israeli occupying forces, as shown in a study published in 1990 with the assistance of the Swedish Rädda Barnen organization. Many children had been killed or crippled for life since the intifada had begun.

36. There had also been other forms of discrimination, including the recent large-scale prohibition on visits to Israel by Palestinians, thus depriving them of their jobs.

37. Collective punishment of Palestinians was common, even though it was prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention.

38. All those human rights violations in the occupied territories stemmed from the unresolved political conflict. It was nearly 43 years since the State of Israel had been created, and the Palestinians still did not have their homeland. The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination depended on a political settlement of the issue. It was therefore necessary to convene a conference on the Middle East which would be held with the participation of all the parties concerned, including the PLO, under the auspices of the United Nations.

39. His delegation hoped that the solution of the Gulf conflict on the basis of the Security Council's resolutions would pave the way for a more comprehensive solution to the problem of the Middle East. From that point of view, the Palestinian question should certainly be given the highest priority. Only a political solution could guarantee conditions of genuine respect for human rights in the region.

40. Mr. BLACKWELL (United States of America), referring to agenda item 4, said that the question of the violation of human rights in the occupied territories was a complex one which must be understood in the context of the pressing need for an overall peace settlement. His country would like once

again to stress the importance and urgency of resuming a process of direct negotiations aimed at achieving that goal. It had called for restraint on all sides and it reiterated that appeal.

41. The United States could not and would not seek to impose its own views regarding the nature of a final settlement. However, it was convinced that the nations of the region should also refrain from seeking to dictate to one another. Instead, they should join together with all other member countries in a collective search for peace motivated by common convictions about the value and worth of individual human beings living in civil society, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and many other human rights instruments adopted by the United Nations. The leaders of nations had no moral right to incite or perpetrate hatred and animosity. Rather, they had a moral responsibility to extend a friendly hand to their neighbours and seek to promote friendship and reconciliation.

42. The United States deeply regretted that the region's history throughout the last half century had included far too many hostile and violent acts and it understood that the region's inhabitants could not help being scarred by those events. However, the search for peace required that animosity should be set aside in a mutual commitment to the effort to seek enduring solutions. As a step which would facilitate negotiations in a spirit of friendship, it was important that the parties should accord each other the good faith and respect which every human being believed he deserved.

43. The United States was deeply committed to the welfare of the Palestinian people. For 45 years, the United States Government had been the largest contributor to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and its contribution had exceeded $65 million in 1990. In addition, the United States had been a major source of contributions to the programmes of private voluntary organizations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

44. It had long been his country's position that settlement activities in the occupied territories were an obstacle to the achievement of a just and lasting peace and it had repeatedly urged the Government of Israel to refrain from establishing more settlements or expanding existing settlements. Israel had a clear responsibility to maintain law and order in the occupied territories, in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and a responsibility to administer those territories in keeping with the provisions of that Convention. The United States noted that the Government of Israel had begun taking positive steps early in the summer of 1990 to limit confrontation between the security forces and the civilian population and to reduce the level of violence. Unfortunately, in the last quarter of the year, a series of incidents and confrontations had interrupted what had appeared to be a positive trend and tensions and violence had again increased.

45. Civil violence did not contribute to the search for peace. The United States was concerned about violence directed at Israeli civilians and security personnel and, in particular, about the unprovoked, deadly attacks on Israeli civilians that had increased in frequency towards the end of 1990. The rise in violence committed by Palestinians against other Palestinians in the occupied territories was also a cause for alarm.

46. At the same time, the United States was concerned about the use by the Israeli security forces of excessive and often lethal force against Palestinians on several occasions during the past year. In voting for Security Council resolutions 672 (1990) and 673 (1990), the United States had expressed its deep concern about the excessive use of force. It had also clearly and publicly deplored other Israeli practices, such as administrative detention of Palestinians, the demolition of dwellings, and deportations. In particular, it had deplored the decision to resume deportations of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, as referred to in Security Council resolution 681 (1990), and had strongly urged Israel to cease that practice immediately and permanently.

47. His delegation also drew attention to the very real and very serious security problems that Israel had to cope with. The purely offensive attacks Iraq was now carrying out with ballistic missiles on Israeli population centres, and the resulting civilian casualties, were ample demonstration of the threat Israel had faced ever since its foundation. During the past year, rocket attacks from beyond Israel's borders and infiltration by terrorists that had led to loss of life among the inhabitants had been realities that Israeli citizens and officials had been compelled to deal with daily. The United States hoped that, at the current session, the Commission on Human Rights would take account of those concerns and advance the search for a comprehensive solution and genuine peace between Israel and its neighbours.

48. The United States would not vote in favour of one-sided resolutions which singled out Israel's policies in the occupied territories and failed to call for equal restraint by the other parties in respecting the personal safety and other human rights of Israeli citizens. Human rights were universal and they applied to all men, women and children on every continent and in every country, including the citizens of Israel and the Palestinian inhabitants of the occupied territories.

49. Mr. PAGAC (Czech and Slovak Federal Republic), referring to agenda item 4, said that, for the first time in 45 years, his country had become a member of the Commission. It was perhaps symbolic that the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic had been elected as a member of the Commission at a time when issues of human rights and fundamental freedoms had such an important role to play in the democratic process in that country.

50. His delegation regretted that the situation in the occupied Arab territories was still extremely tense and had deteriorated further in 1990, with more difficult living conditions, outbursts of violence and human rights violations becoming almost matters of routine. The events in the Middle East also showed how the conflict in that unfortunate region could be used to cover up aggression and other unlawful acts by manipulating public opinion and the feelings of the Arab population.

51. His Government was deeply concerned about the latest report by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and especially about the sad reality that, in the year when the Convention on the Rights of the Child had entered into force, many children had been among the victims of murderous acts committed by both sides.

52. A precondition for the mutual confidence now so badly lacking in relations between the Jewish and Arab populations was that Israel should fulfil its international obligations under the 1907 Hague Convention and the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and that it should agree to co-operate with the United Nations. Regrettably, old stereotypes and prejudices which no longer corresponded to present realities and needs still prevailed and no common language had been found for the start of a constructive dialogue.

53. No agreement had yet been reached on an international peace conference on the Middle East. His country was of the opinion that any solution resulting from such a conference should confirm and guarantee the right of all States, including Israel, to exist within secure and internationally recognized borders, as well as the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. It fervently hoped that, when the Gulf war was over, all interested parties would become involved in that type of negotiation and spare no effort to ensure that the Middle East made its indispensable contribution to the building of a broader, global system of international peace, security and co-operation.

54. His country would like to understand better the underlying causes of the conflicts in that region and intended to pursue a balanced policy towards the Arab States and Israel, while maintaining its traditional friendly relations with the Arab nations, including the Palestinian nation. In its opinion, the monitoring mechanisms and special procedures established by the United Nations in the field of human rights might, if used in the most objective manner, contribute to a process of negotiations aimed at a comprehensive solution and a genuine and lasting peace in the Middle East.

55. Mr. RECHETOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the situation in the occupied Arab territories had worsened in recent months. Like many delegations and non-governmental organizations before, his delegation condemned Israeli violations of the human rights of the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories. It disapproved of the acts of repression against the civilian population, the mass arrests, torture and ill-treatment of detainees, the murderous actions against the Palestinians and the continued acts of violence. The violations affecting children were particularly disturbing. All those acts were a serious threat to peace. The Soviet Union had always approved consideration, by the Security Council, of the situation in the region, and the resolutions adopted by the Council.

56. The Israeli-Arab conflict arose out of the failure of the Israeli authorities to comply with universally recognized human rights standards and to observe the Fourth Geneva Convention, and by their opposition to negotiations for a political solution. It was caused, in particular, by the fact that the Palestinian people was denied the exercise of its inalienable right to self-determination. It was essential for the parties to the conflict to break the vicious circle of violence and to endeavour to solve the problems exclusively by political means. The final stage in a political dialogue could be an international conference on the Near East in which the five permanent members of the Security Council would participate together with all interested parties, including the Palestinians. The Soviet Union was prepared to contribute to such a settlement process.

57. Several delegations had raised the issue of the emigration to Israel of Jews from Eastern Europe, and in particular from the Soviet Union. The USSR had repeatedly stated its opposition to the settling of immigrants in the occupied territories, as it was contrary to the rules of international law, and had been a sponsor of the resolution adopted on the subject by the Commission at its previous session. However, the departure of Soviet citizens abroad was in conformity with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and could only be restricted under the conditions set out in those instruments.

58. The crisis in the occupied Arab territories illustrated the tragic consequences that could arise from failure to recognize the right of peoples to self-determination. The principle of self-determination was the corner-stone of the hierarchy of the values of nations. All peoples should be able freely to choose their destiny and the means of their development, on the understanding that that right should not be exercised to the detriment of other peoples.

59. Exercise of the right to self-determination was a complex issue: it took the form of political independence, although it was also a process of strengthening national dignity, consolidating political autonomy, and developing the language and culture. The attempts being made to interfere in the free development of peoples were inadmissible.

60. Denial of the right to self-determination was a source of destabilization in the various regions of the world, and in turn the regional conflicts threatened international stability as a whole. The situation in the Near East was an example of that. However, another area of conflict had recently appeared with the aggression against Kuwait by Iraq, which had deprived the Kuwaiti people not only of its right to self-determination, but also of the right to call itself a people. The consequences of that act were tragic, and as yet unforeseeable.

61. There were other more encouraging developments. After the German people had freely expressed itself, the two German States had reunited; that event was of historic significance and would undoubtedly have a positive impact on the evolution of the world situation. Elsewhere, the exercise by the Namibian people of its right to self-determination, under the auspices of the United Nations, had given birth to a new independent State, which had become a full Member of the United Nations, and had led to a certain stabilization of the situation in southern Africa. As far as the process of reaching a settlement on Cambodia was concerned, it seemed that the positions of the parties to the conflict had come closer together and that the efforts made by the permanent members of the Security Council, as well as the initiatives of other States, had opened the way to creating an independent, non-aligned Cambodian State, even if all the problems had not been settled. His delegation considered that the Commission could, at its current session, prepare a resolution by consensus that took into account the interests of all parties concerned and contributed to the process of a peaceful settlement. His delegation was prepared to work to that end. In addition, the situation in Afghanistan remained difficult, although the Geneva Agreements had apparently established a sound basis for a settlement. Lastly, his delegation had appreciated the report on the question of the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination, and endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report.

62. A number of delegations had expressed their concern about the evolution of the situation in the Soviet Union, and in particular with regard to relations between the republics and the centre. In that connection, he recalled that perestroika was a difficult process that required time and skill, and raised historical, socio-economic, legal, ecological, demographic, linguistic, cultural and other problems. However, the Constitution of the USSR gave each republic the right to leave the Union, and the manner in which that right could be exercised was detailed in special laws. The attempts being made to avoid applying current legislation on that point only generated additional tension, and might lead people to commit thoughtless acts. A union treaty that would precisely define the jurisdiction of the centre and of the republics was currently being studied. The success of perestroika depended not only on the efforts made inside the country, but also on the existence of a climate of confidence among States and the support of the international community.

63. His delegation was convinced that the decisions taken by the Commission on Human Rights at the current session would contribute to strengthening the principles of freedom of choice and the right of peoples to self-determination, thus ensuring a degree of stability in the world order.

64. Mr. ROA KOURI (Cuba), speaking on agenda item 4, said that despite the hope that had been expressed in some quarters, one year previously, of a world free from the nuclear threat, from antagonism between the military blocs and from the cold war, the persistence of long-standing hotbeds of tension in Africa and Latin America, the aggravation of the situation in the Middle East and the conflict in the Gulf, whose outcome was increasingly unpredictable, made it necessary to exercise the greatest circumspection in forecasting future world developments.

65. The year 1990 had not brought to the inhabitants of the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine, either a softening of the harsh emergency measures imposed by Israel or an end to the brutal reprisals systematically taken against militants in the intifada and against the Arab population in general. Torture was practised in Israeli prisons, as former Palestinian detainees had testified; illegal expulsions of Arab citizens, above all of women and children, were continuing; and the demolition of houses was commonplace, both in the occupied Syrian Golan, in Gaza and in the West Bank. In spite of the repeated appeals by the international community, calling upon them to apply the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, as they were required to, the Zionist authorities continued to infringe the Convention with total impunity, under the protection of their strategic allies.

66. In the face of the continuation and intensification of the legitimate resistance of the Palestinians, Israeli troops had demonstrated universally condemned brutality. The massacres in Rishon Lezion and in the Al-Aqsa Mosque in May and October 1990 confirmed that commitment to violence. The report of the Special Committee showed that over the four years of the Palestinian uprising, Israeli troops had employed blind violence - a sign of impotence on the part of oppressors - which had recently intensified and become systematic.

67. That pattern of violence was planned and authorized by the Israeli Government as a means not only of "winning the war" but of perpetuating the occupation of Palestine and other Arab territories. The de-Arabization measures, expropriation of land or other property, expulsions, the illegal

establishment of Israeli settlements and the systematic use of terror also had the same aim. Tension had reached an extremely dangerous point between August 1989 and August 1990. Unless urgent measures were taken to remedy the serious human rights violations, that situation could lead to an enormous explosion in the region.

68. It was no secret that the occupation of Arab territories by the Israeli Zionists was only made possible by the unconditional support they had always received from the United States, which provided arms and economic assistance and protected them with its veto in the Security Council. The Government of the United States was currently parading as the champion of the self-determination of peoples, although only recently it had flouted that right in a Latin American country and in a country in the Caribbean, and proclaiming the need to send missions of the Commission to investigate alleged human rights violations, whereas it had prevented the Security Council from ordering an investigation into the massacres committed by its Israeli allies a few months previously. Such hypocrisy, the accomplice of the most unworthy causes, was precisely why the Commission had each year to investigate, condemn and propose new urgent measures, that were of course not applied, regarding Israeli practices in the occupied Arab territories.

69. Cuba considered that in order to attain a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, whose only cause was the question of Palestine, it was necessary to organize as quickly as possible a peace conference on the Middle East, held under the auspices of the United Nations and attended by all the interested parties, especially Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. It was also necessary to demand that Israel should apply in full the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 in all the occupied territories, as well as all the General Assembly and Security Council resolutions concerning the Middle East and Palestine. The dawning of a world freed from the danger of war - be it the cold war or war itself - which had been optimistically heralded the previous year by many of the Commission's members, required the restoration of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, and respect for the dignity of man and the right of peoples to control their destiny.

70. Mr. SEMICHI (Observer for Algeria), speaking on agenda item 4, wondered whether it was still conceivable, after more than 20 years, and at a time when conflicts in the region had reached an unprecedented level of gravity on account of the manifest complaisance towards Israel, the main factor of division and aggression in that part of the world, that the violation of human rights in the occupied Arab territories should be considered in the same, somewhat routine manner as it had been for some time. The tragedy experienced by the Palestinian people was only matched by the implacable and ever-growing repression methodically imposed upon it by the Israeli occupying forces. The endless list of cold-blooded crimes thus perpetrated continued to lengthen: the execution, on 8 October 1990, of Palestinian workers at Rishon Lezion and the premeditated massacre carried out by Israeli soldiers and settlers on the esplanade of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which had left at least 21 victims and several hundred wounded. With their customary cynicism, the Israeli authorities had attempted to convince world public opinion that the responsibility for those massacres lay with the very people who had been massacred.

71. However, those incidents had occurred just a few days after the violent and blind attack on 21 September 1990 against the Bureij Palestinian refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, which had claimed 180 victims, and had moreover led to the destruction of 57 houses and shops and the arrest of hundreds of people. Similar acts of terror had also been regularly perpetrated in other refugee camps. Israel had so far refused to comply with Security Council resolution 672 (1990), adopted unanimously, which had envisaged the sending of a mission of inquiry to the site of the 8 October shooting. Since the beginning of the intifada in December 1987, those acts had been compounded by the dramatic expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland in blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, whose applicability to the populations of the occupied Arab territories Israel refused to recognize.

72. Such persistent denial of the fundamental and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of the other Arab populations under Israeli domination was based on a mistaken logic charged with dangers of all kinds for international peace and security. It was thus hardly surprising that the Israeli authorities considered the occupied territories, and probably others they dreamt of annexing, as an integral part of what they described as "Greater Israel". To realize that objective, the Israeli authorities pursued their policy of replacing the Palestinians, whom they were deliberately displacing, with an increasing number of Jewish immigrants, in particular from the Soviet Union and other countries in Eastern Europe. Thus, at the end of the previous year, more than 200,000 settlers had been installed in occupied Palestine. According to certain sources, there were even plans to install between 750,000 and 1 million new Jewish settlers by the year 2000, which could only herald new danger in view of the expansionist ambitions of the Zionist State.

73. As the international community had so far failed in its attempts to compel Israel to abide by the law, and to promote a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem, there were legitimate grounds for fearing an explosion throughout the Middle East. That possibility had moreover been raised by the President of the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly after his visit to the occupied Palestinian territories in January 1991. He had said that an international conference was more necessary than ever to ensure the future of the region and that the time had come for that conference to be held.

74. Algeria fully supported the Palestinian people in its heroic intifada and called upon the international community, and more particularly the Security Council, which was responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, fully to assume its mandate in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations. It was convinced that a just, global and lasting solution in the Near East could not be achieved without recognition of the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination and to build an independent State on its territory. The emergence of a new international order, which Algeria hoped for, largely depended on the international community's impartial and unequivocal efforts to reach a just solution for the Palestinian question. A search for an effective solution depended entirely on the strict implementation of international norms, the true guarantor of which was the United Nations.

75. Mr. AZIKIWE (Observer for Nigeria) said that the optimism shown by the international community at the Commission's forty-sixth session was no longer appropriate. Recent events in the Gulf and in other parts of the world showed that the international order was still threatened. The lesson to be drawn from that observation was that peace and security were never acquired once and for all. The Commission should continue to do its utmost to prevent discrimination, protect minorities and promote human rights.

76. His delegation noted with concern that the situation of the Palestinians in the occupied Arab territories was deteriorating. It firmly condemned the widespread and systematic violations committed by Israel, as described in documents A/45/84, A/45/306 and A/45/576. It called on Israel to implement the resolutions of the Security Council concerning Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories as well as the numerous resolutions of the General Assembly. Moreover, Israel should respect the consensus among the international community regarding the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the inhabitants of the occupied Arab territories.

77. There was no doubt that the Middle East question was complex. Two principal issues had to be taken into account: the inalienable right of the Palestinians to a homeland and the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories, and, on the other hand, the assurance of the existence and security of the State of Israel. His delegation called for an international conference on the Middle East to address all aspects of the problem with a view to finding a just and lasting solution. All parties to the conflict should take part in that conference.

78. The right of peoples to self-determination was fundamental and inalienable. Respect for that right was an essential condition for the observance and promotion of human rights. Violations of the right to self-determination affected not only the full realization of the rights of the individual, but also the nature of inter-State relations. Article 1 (2) of the Charter clearly stated that one of the purposes of the United Nations was "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples".

79. His delegation called on the Commission to condemn all practices which impeded the exercise of the right to self-determination and to ensure the application of that principle in southern Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf region. With regard to Kuwait, which was a sovereign and independent nation, Nigeria called for the unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces so that the people of Kuwait could again exercise its inalienable right to self-determination.

80. Rather than resorting to force, which did not solve problems, and which led to terrible suffering, the international community should learn to settle conflicts in a civilized manner, through dialogue and negotiation. Lastly, he reaffirmed the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for their right to self-determination, independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial domination, apartheid and all forms of foreign occupation. The enjoyment of the right to self-determination was essential for world peace, security and stability.

81. Mr. ALEX (Observer for Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Communities, said that events in the Gulf region should not prevent the international community from continuing to pay close attention to developments in the Israeli-Arab conflict and, in particular, the human rights situation in the occupied territories. The Twelve were concerned by the marked deterioration of the situation in the Arab territories occupied by Israel. That deterioration, after some 20 years of Israeli occupation and almost 3 years after the start of the Palestinian uprising, made a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict even more urgent.

82. Despite the many appeals made in recent years by the international community, including the Twelve, Israel had not halted its collective reprisals, such as destruction of houses or restrictions on freedom of movement. The Twelve had repeatedly condemned the expulsion and deportation measures taken by Israel in contravention of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. They urged Israel to act in a manner consistent with its obligations under that Convention. In general, they considered that Israel should co-operate with the United Nations in that area.

83. They also regretted that Israel had not carried out resolution 1990/1, adopted at the forty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights, which had called upon it to stop settling new immigrants in the occupied territories. Furthermore, the Twelve hoped that the establishment of a cease-fire would not entail an increase of human rights violations in the occupied territories. They noted that, in any event, the cease-fire must remain an exceptional measure in force for a limited time. Being convinced that violence begat violence, the Twelve condemned any use of force by any party. In that context, they deplored the acts of violence committed against Israeli civilians in the occupied territories.

84. With regard to the Palestinian question, the Twelve affirmed the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to security - in other words, the right to live within secure recognized and guaranteed frontiers. They also recognized the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination, with all that that implied.

85. Lastly, the European Communities and their member States, which had political, economic and cultural ties with the countries and peoples of the Middle East region, could not remain indifferent to the serious events that had occurred since 2 August 1990, which had adverse consequences not only for peace and security but also for respect for human rights in the region. In their view, it was more important than ever to pursue efforts to establish a dialogue leading to a lasting solution.

86. Mr. WALDEN (Observer for Israel) said he was once again sorry to note that none of the speakers on agenda items 4 and 9 had put forward a single new argument since those items had been under discussion by the Commission or even attempted to respond to any of the points raised by the Israeli delegation at previous sessions. The only new feature was the fact that the members of the Commission on Human Rights included Iraq, a country about which much would be said during the consideration of agenda item 12 (b) but which, in the meantime, was among those sitting in judgement on Israel's human rights record. That totally surrealist scenario showed that truth was sometimes stranger than fiction.

87. The apparent theme of all the statements made by most Arab delegations under items 4 and 9 was the rights of the Palestinians, but in reality those statements concerned what those delegations regarded as the absolute illegitimacy of Israel's existence. The rights of the Palestinians which those countries were ostensibly defending in fact boiled down for them to the basic right of the Palestinians to wipe Israel off the map. It was no secret to anybody that, for almost all the Arab world, the very existence of Israel was a denial of the rights of Arabs and Palestinians. In that connection, it would be interesting to know whether the PLO, which had proclaimed its readiness to recognize Israel's existence, was also ready to repudiate the statement made by its Iraqi allies according to which they intended to liberate Palestine from racist Zionist domination. Was the PLO also prepared to condemn the bombing of Israeli cities by the Iraqis, the sole purpose of which was to terrorize the population of Israel and drag Israel into the Gulf war? Obviously, not only would the PLO leaders not condemn those acts but they fully supported Iraq's aggression against Israel as well as its aggression against Kuwait. They thus unveiled their true aims and had abandoned all pretence of seeking a peaceful settlement with Israel.

88. With regard to the territories themselves, certain historical facts should be recalled: the slogan proclaimed by those who had precipitated the "six-day war" in 1967 had not been "liberate the occupied territories", for Israel had not yet been in the territories, but to regain the Al-Aqsa Mosque and to "liberate Palestine", in other words to eliminate the State of Israel. That was also the aim of the "Palestine Liberation Organization", set up in 1964, or three years before Israel had arrived in the territories. Since then, Israel had never ceased to proclaim its desire to make peace with all Arab States and with the Palestinian inhabitants of the territories through negotiations with them, since negotiation was one of the primary means of settling international disputes, as laid down in Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations. Israel had in fact formally committed itself to negotiating with the Arab States and with elected representatives of the Palestinians by virtue of the Camp David accords, under which it had returned to Egypt the Sinai Peninsula, representing some 90 per cent of the territories taken in 1967. However, the PLO and the rest of the Arab world had rejected the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. Under their influence, the United Nations, the very organ founded to promote world peace, had also repudiated the treaty and had refused, as indeed it was still refusing, its allotted role in the implementation of that accord. As for the other Camp David agreement, relating to the future of the territories, it had sparked off the same reaction from the time of its signature, and the rejection of its provisions continued to be a fundamental principle of PLO and Arab thinking. That rejection was explained by the fact that the agreement had provided expressly for negotiations between Israel and the Arab States and with the elected representatives of the Palestinian Arabs, which implied recognition of Israel's existence. The Arab States and the PLO had not at the time been ready, and were still not ready, to accept that condition, which was why they were calling for the convening of an international conference. However, Israel continued to believe that peace could be achieved only through direct negotiations between full and equal representatives, and not through the intervention of an indefinite number of interested parties, each with its own axe to grind.

89. With regard to self-determination, the topic of agenda item 9, the PLO could clearly no longer pretend to be an upholder of that principle, given the enthusiasm with which it had welcomed the invasion and despoliation of Kuwait by Iraq and its satisfaction at seeing Kuwaitis deprived of the rights which it claimed for the Palestinians. Such duplicity should, and probably would, make it impossible for anyone to take the PLO seriously again as an actor on the international scene. Moreover, if self-determination was taken to mean the right of peoples to determine their own future, then that right was expressly recognized by the Camp David accords. It had not been possible to execute the plan put forward by Mr. Shamir in 1990 for implementing those accords because of the pressure exerted on Israel to negotiate, not with the elected representatives of the Palestinians, but with the PLO which, with the support of the United Nations, had proclaimed itself "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians" when in fact it had imposed its authority on the inhabitants of the territories solely by terror and had even had some 300 Arabs in the territories executed on the grounds of alleged "collaboration" with Israeli forces, by which it meant a refusal to do the PLO's bidding. Everyone, including Arab leaders, now knew the true nature of the PLO and of its leaders and their new friends: Saddam Hussein, Abu Abbas, Abu Nidal, Habash, Hawatmeh and all the others with whom they wanted Israel to negotiate. Recent events had shown the futility of trying to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict in that manner. The PLO had brought nothing but disaster on the Palestinians. Its support of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait was only the latest colossal mistake in a long history of errors, and the Palestinians would have no chance of achieving anything until they rid themselves of that incubus.

90. Pending the results of negotiations on the territories, Israel was obliged to consider its own security, as well as the welfare of the Palestinians living in the territories. The Israeli authorities indeed applied - and it mattered little whether they did so de facto or de jure - the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, but the current situation compelled them to adopt measures which might seem unduly harsh but were unavoidable. It was not true that the curfew that had been imposed in the territories since the outbreak of the Gulf war was so strict as to prevent the Palestinian Arabs from resupplying themselves with basic needs, including food, since food and medicine were distributed to them. It was however clear that, given the threats made by various Palestinian groups, and above all the PLO, even before the outbreak of hostilities, Israel had unfortunately been obliged to take stringent measures to protect its citizens, many of whom were the victims of aggression by the Arabs which was practically never mentioned in the media or the Commission. For instance, speakers who had referred to the Temple Mount incident, when 17 Palestinians had been killed, had failed to mention that it had been precipitated by the throwing of rocks by thousands of Palestinians at Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall. In response to such acts of violence, Israel had an obligation to maintain order, as stated in article 64 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and article 43 of the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention of 1907. It should, however, be emphasized that Israeli soldiers had received strict instructions concerning the use of firearms, to which they could have recourse only as a last resort and only when their lives were endangered. It was true that abuses had sometimes been committed and that certain soldiers had not followed the orders received. In every such case, however, an investigation had been carried out and the culprits punished. It should also be stated that, contrary to certain allegations, those residents of the territories who were suspected of having

committed security offences were afforded all guarantees of due process under international law and the humanitarian provisions of the Geneva Conventions. Such persons could also petition the High Court of Justice, thus guaranteeing the maintenance of the rule of law. At times it had been necessary to resort to administrative detention measures for security reasons, but that had been done in strict accordance with article 78 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. It should also be emphasized that administrative detention was not intended as a punishment for violations committed, but rather to prevent the persons concerned from committing other illegal acts directly endangering public order, security and the lives of innocent people.

91. Lastly, it was important to note that, under a special agreement with the ICRC, representatives of that organization could make regular visits to detainees, that ICRC doctors were permitted to examine any detainees who complained of improper treatment and that their reports were promptly delivered to the Israeli authorities. Any complaint of that kind was investigated thoroughly and the ICRC was informed of the findings. As to expulsions, they were strictly limited to cases in which the presence of the persons in question in the territories administered by Israel constituted a threat to public security.

92. His delegation wished to emphasize that Israel was the first to want a permanent settlement to the Israeli-Arab conflict which would enable all peoples in the region to live in peace and harmony. That might perhaps be possible when countries such as Iraq and Syria had leaders who wished to live in peace with Israel and not to destroy it, when the Palestinians chose representatives who did not dream of the day when they would retake Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem from Israel, and when certain well-meaning countries realized that face-to-face negotiations between parties who all genuinely sought peace were the only means of achieving such a settlement. It was to be hoped that that day would not be far removed.

93. Mr. Vassilenko (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) took the Chair.

94. Mr. LAMBERT (Parliamentary Association for Euro-Arab Co-operation) said that, during visits to the Middle East and particularly to Israel and the occupied territories in 1990, representatives of the Parliamentary Association for Euro-Arab Co-operation (PAEAC) had observed the many human rights violations being committed by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinians. One example was the closure of Palestinian universities, a measure introduced in early 1988 and regularly extended since then, despite being contrary to article 50 of the Fourth Geneva Convention; it represented a collective punishment against more than 15,000 students and seriously compromised the professional future of several generations.

95. The situation of the Palestinian people was even more disturbing today, for in addition to all the usual forms of persecution, it had been hard hit by the Gulf crisis. It had been deprived of the income from remittances sent by Palestinians working abroad, the earnings from Palestinian exports to the Gulf countries through Jordan and the wages of 20,000 day workers who had been forbidden by the Israeli Government to enter Israel to work since October. Moreover, the very strict 24-hour curfew imposed in the Gaza Strip since 15 January and in the West Bank since 17 January was likely to have tragic consequences for 1.7 million Palestinians who could no longer leave their homes to acquire fresh supplies, receive medical care or, in the case of

farmers, harvest their crops. There was also a total lack of protection for the Palestinian population in the occupied territories. The closure of many foreign consulates deprived the Palestinians, at a critical juncture, of a substantial force of onlookers who, simply by their presence, protected them from various possible abuses by the Israeli army and Israeli settlers. Lastly, not all Palestinians had the gas masks distributed to the population since the start of the war or the necessary medicines, particularly atropine. On the basis of all those facts, together with the resurgence of human rights violations in the occupied territories, it could be stated that the entire Palestinian population had been taken hostage by the Israeli Government.

96. Accordingly, PAEAC and all the non-governmental organizations members of the International Co-ordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine appealed to the Commission on Human Rights to take urgent action to ensure the immediate lifting of the cease-fire imposed in the occupied territories, which in its view was more of a collective punishment than a precautionary measure and was therefore a violation of the occupier's obligation to maintain a balance between its own security needs and the welfare of the local population. PAEAC also called for steps to be taken to ensure the international protection of the Palestinian population against the effects of the war and against the violence inflicted on it by the occupying Power. To that end, persons should be sent to the occupied territories to observe the situation, and the local staff of organizations such as UNRWA, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should be reinforced.

97. PAEAC, together with all the other NGOs concerned by the question of Palestine, had since 1983 been advocating the organization of an international Middle East peace conference in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 38/58 C. It supported the idea of convening an international conference on the question of Palestine in accordance with the terms of General Assembly resolution 43/176 of 15 December 1988, with a view to establishing a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. PAEAC urged the Commission on Human Rights to call upon the General Assembly and the Security Council to prove their impartiality as far as respect for international legality was concerned by recognizing the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, immediately taking the necessary steps to convene such an international conference and adopting the requisite measures to ensure the protection of the Palestinian people in the meantime.

98. Mr. RASPUTRAM (Observer for Sri Lanka), exercising his right of reply, said he wished to give some explanations in the light of the statement made by the non-governmental organization Liberation under agenda item 9. The truth was that the LTTE had denied the Tamil community the right to choose its representatives through free and fair elections by systematically attacking all opposing Tamil parties through murder and terrorism and consistently refusing to meet representatives of other Tamil political parties, the Government and indeed political parties of other communities in order to evolve a national consensus for a political solution to the problems faced by Sri Lanka.

99. His Government, for its part, was working towards such a political solution. Negotiations were in progress with the democratic parties of the Tamil community. The representative of Liberation had said that there was a de facto blockade and in fact had accused not only the authorities but also

the Muslim community in the north and the east of the country of killing Tamil civilians. His delegation rejected those totally unfounded allegations. Anyone, including journalists, was free to visit any part of the country.

100. At the latest session of the Sub-Commission, several members had referred to the atrocities committed by the LTTE, including the murder of Muslim civilians in a mosque and terrorist attacks directed against innocent civilians of all communities. The LTTE was continuing its policy of ethnic segregation by expelling Muslims and members of other communities from their homes. As a result of those violent acts, there was a massive exodus of people to other parts of the country.

101. While it was amenable to constructive criticism, his Government could not accept that a terrorist group espousing the dismemberment of the country on racist or ethnic lines should be presented as an appropriate vehicle for the right to self-determination. The Sri Lankan Government was neither a colonial Power nor an alien entity but had been elected democratically by all communities in Sri Lanka, including the Tamil community. The overwhelming majority of the Tamil community wanted lasting peace in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic polity.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.